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ABSTRACT

Significant changes in state management procedures and in certification of general and special education teachers are occurring as a result of the competency-based movement. The basic task in developing and implementing a workable system is identification of the requisite competencies and determination of competency measurement procedures. Special education (SE) presents problems in certification which are held in common with general education and are unique to SE. Some SE trends that will foster changes in certification are educating handicapped students in regular classes with resource room teacher support and reducing the number of categories for SE certification. That the performance based concept has also permeated inservice teacher education is evident from changing recertification procedures and increased interstate reciprocity in certification. (MC)

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BACKGROUND READING FOR THE PS&G EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

CERTIFICATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL

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The State has traditionally played a key role in the process of teacher education and certification. It is with the recognition that teaching is probably the key factor in pupil learning that the State has assumed responsibility for insuring that those who teach in a given jurisdiction meet certain prescribed minimum training standards.

Each state department of education is involved directly or indirectly in the accreditation or approval of teacher education programs, the successful completion of which culminates in the issuance of a certificate or license to practice. The processes of teacher education and certification are therefore mutually supportive and complimentary to one another.

Performance-Based Teacher Education and Certification

Within the past two or three years, a fresh new approach to the problem of teacher education and certification has been developed and has spread rapidly across the country. Placing major emphasis on the premise that teachers should be competent and tying in rather closely to the broad movement for greater accountability in education, performance-based teacher education and certification has necessitated the adoption of new procedures in state management of these important processes. No longer is it possible to merely review transcripts to verify that college

courses with certain specified titles have been completed and that appropriate degrees have been awarded. In fact, much of the impetus for new teacher education and certification schemes has resulted from the inadequacy of traditional certification procedures to be any sort of reliable guarantee of actual teaching performance.

Much of traditional teacher training has been experience based. The assumption has probably always been that completion of a given course would result in the acquisition of certain competencies considered essential to satisfactory performance in the teaching role. The traditional culminating experience of student teaching has typically been the student's acid test to determine his ability to "put it all together" and demonstrate his competence through actual performance.

Performance-based programs, on the other hand, according to the definition of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, are those in which

> "performance goals are specified, and agreed to, in rigorous detail in advance of instruction. The student must either be able to demonstrate his ability to promote desirable learning or exhibit behaviors known to promote it. He is held accountable, not for passing grades, but for attaining a given level of competency in performing the essential task of teaching; the training institution is itself held accountable for producing able teachers. Emphasis is on demonstrated product or output."[1]

In referring to the new movement, some prefer to use the term "competency-based" rather than "performance-based," implying that the former is a more comprehensive term which includes not

only performance, application, or skill, but knowledge (or understanding) and attitude (or feeling) as well. A competency-based program, then, may not equate exactly with a behavioral or performance objective approach, nor to criterion-referenced instruction, nor to a performance-based program.

In any event, basing teacher certification on performance or competency criteria requires basic changes in State management procedures. Most states continue to emphasize the primary role of the college or university in teacher training, but the trend clearly indicates increased reliance on experiences in the field, necessitating greater cooperation and collaboration among the institutions and other agencies involved--the state department of education, local school districts, and the organized profession. Some states are beginning to mandate performance-based teacher education and certification. Steps in this direction have already been taken in New York, Texas, and Florida, for example. The implications are apparent for both general and special education. With the concurrent trend toward mainstreaming the education of the handicapped, regular elementary and secondary teachers will be required to have at least minimal competence to direct the learning activities of children with various kinds of atypical physical and mental conditions. The preparation of special education personnel will require modification as well to insure their competence in diagnosing, prescribing and treating the different kinds of handicapping conditions.

Documenting and Measuring Competencies

While the goal of performance-based teacher education and certification seems simple enough, the basic task in developing a workable procedure is the identification of the requisite competencies for performance in a given professional role. Agreement must also be achieved with regard to the kinds of evidence that will be accepted as indication that the individual has attained the competencies described. Competencies, when appropriate, should be differentiated at various levels--intern level, job entry level, fully qualified level.

A monumental effort by the Florida State Department of Education to collect, catalog, review, and report on competency-based teacher training materials which have been developed throughout the country has resulted in the publication of a Catalog of Teacher Competencies.[2] This annotated listing of competency-based modules identifies appropriate competency-based materials which can be incorporated into teacher education programs.

Another notable and more recent publication is Resource for Performance-Based Education, compiled by W. Robert Houston, et al, under the general auspices of the Multi-State Consortium on Performance-Based Teacher Education.[3] The resources are cross-referenced to the Florida Catalog and include annotated listings of films, slides/tapes, modules, programmed texts, and multi-media kits for training prospective or in-service educational personnel.

Procedures for determining competence have typically emphasized (1) analysis of teacher behavior to determine the presence or absence of skills and characteristics deemed essential to effective performance in the professional role, (2) measurement of the results of instruction as the criterion for satisfactory or successful performance, or (3) some combination of these two procedures. Most efforts have been concentrated in the first category, attempting to measure the knowledge, understanding, attitude, and skills of the prospective candidate for certification.

Houston has identified a list of teacher competencies stated at the sub-goal level under such broad categories as: diagnosis and evaluation, organizing classroom, goals and objectives, planning, communication, instruction, management, interpersonal, evaluation, self-improvement, and colleagues and other professionals.[4]

The Utah State Board of Education recently adopted what may have been the first actual competency-based certification standard. The proficiency guidelines for certification in the field of instructional media are based on measurable performance criteria. Examinations for proficiency are provided and those candidates who perform satisfactorily are considered to have met the endorsement requirement regardless of the route taken to obtain the specific proficiency.

Efforts are going forward in the field of special education also. Much of the activity is concentrated on the attempt to determine essential competencies needed by teachers of the

handicapped including such things as personal characteristics and social skills, understanding of students served, knowledge of curriculum content and instructional resources, and ability to organize the educational environment, use appropriate methodology, and evaluate pupil performance. A noteworthy project in this area is currently underway by the Utah State Board of Education in cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Regional Resource Center to identify the competencies requisite to performing in the role of special education "resource teacher" or "resource specialist." Certification implications of the resource concept are discussed further in another section of this paper.

With regard to using student achievement as a measurement criterion, there are many who contend that student competence is not necessarily evidence of teacher competence and that certification should be based on the quality of skill or understanding rather than on the measure of result. In any event, if teachers are to be evaluated on the basis of certain student outcomes, we should be certain not to base everything on the kind of student performance that can be most easily measured, notably achievement on standardized tests. A number of variables need to be taken into account in determining the degree to which a given teacher is effective, including, for example, the variations that normally exist among groups of students and differences in the amount and kind of learning resources available.

Academic growth of students as a criterion of teacher effectiveness may be particularly disadvantageous in the special

education classroom where progress is often measured in very minute quantities, but the use of standardized tests, in general, has other serious shortcomings as well. A recent study at the University of Illinois revealed that one-fourth of the pupils tested on alternate forms of the same test showed one year's growth in achievement merely because of lack of discrimination by the tests used. Another one-fourth showed a loss of one year for the same reason.[5] There were indications in the Texarkana experiment in performance contracting of a few years ago that there was a 50 percent chance that two-thirds of the students tested with traditional achievement instruments would show a one-year gain by the fourth test even if there had been no instruction given in the interim.

Whatever procedures evolve in our attempt to document the competencies needed for effective professional performance, it is clearly evident that the new system must provide alternative routes to certification. Programs must become more individualized and personalized. No longer will all teachers, in the regular program as well as in special education, come out of approximately the same mold. There will undoubtedly be an increase in recruitment of special education teachers from the ranks of successful aides and paraprofessionals. And as we evaluate various kinds of preparation backgrounds, we should be able to judge those experiences that prove to be most beneficial to the practitioner on the job, as well as those that are less valuable in terms of job performance. Improvement of the system could thus become

a continuing spin-off benefit influencing the evolution of more relevant preparation programs.

Numbers and Kinds of Special Education Certificates

At the present time the average state issues seven or eight different kinds of certificates in special education. Each certificate usually permits an individual to work only with children exhibiting a rather narrowly defined handicapping condition, viz., mentally retarded, emotionally handicapped, deaf, blind, etc. Preliminary information gathered for the Professional Standards Project of the Council for Exceptional Children indicates that individuals most knowledgeable in the field of special education expect the number of certification categories to decrease over the next few years. If these individuals had control over the certification process, it was indicated that the number of separate categorical certificates would drop even more dramatically.

Areas currently certificated in the typical state on a categorical basis may soon be merged into some more general classification in special education. The trend toward preparation and assignment of special education "resource teachers" and the establishment of the "resource room" concept are indicative of the movement in this direction.

Seldom does a given handicapping condition fail to manifest itself in other related problem areas. A student with some degree of mental retardation, for example, may also exhibit symptoms of

emotional disturbance and/or specific learning disabilities. Referring such a child to several different specialists, each dealing with only one aspect of the handicapping condition, represents a fragmented approach to service delivery that is not only inefficient and uneconomical but possibly unnecessary. The resource program focuses on the needs of the child. A properly trained resource teacher can assist the regular classroom teacher and offer specialized assistance to work on each of the child's problems simultaneously.

Traditional specialized categorical training programs for teachers of the handicapped could be eliminated or altered in such a way as to produce a multi-discipline professional with the competency to deal with a variety of handicapping problems including especially those involving communication disorders, learning disabilities, emotional handicaps, and mental retardation. The goal of the resource program also involves the mainstreaming of handicapped students so that well-trained competent specialists are equipped to work primarily as a resource to the classroom teacher.

The resource approach to preparation of special education personnel has been implemented by some institutions and public school systems with encouraging results. Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, in cooperation with four public school districts has developed a program in communicative habilitation which is now offering training to the master's level within the communication-learning model. The program provides sufficient

training to qualify the student for the Certificate of Clinical Competence issued by the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) while at the same time preparing him to work with children presenting disabilities in learning, reading, and other symbolic processes such as arithmetic and spelling.[6]

Most of the students in the Brigham Young University program undergo a graduate internship in the public schools as a part of their training. Here they deal with children exhibiting language, learning, reading, and speech and other communicative problems, giving them remedial and habilitative instruction part of each day but permitting them to spend much of their time in their own classrooms along with non-handicapped students and a regular teacher. The public school administrators and teachers who have worked with the program are generally very enthusiastic concerning its operation and the results obtained.

There are those who contend that it is impossible to control through complicated state certification procedures the level of specificity required for quality performance in narrow categorical areas of special education. It is possible that a system might evolve which would hold the state responsible for the issuance of some sort of generic special education certificate upon the recommendation of the preparing institution based upon the applicant's demonstration of competencies required to perform as a special education teacher. Appropriate involvement and input from local education agencies and the profession would have been provided for and included. Permanent certificates may

appropriately be delayed until after the prospective teacher has demonstrated his competency to those appointed to judge his performance. Later, the general "license to practice" might be supplemented at the local level by having both the profession and the consumers make judgements about the special kinds of qualifications needed to perform certain kinds of tasks requiring a higher level of specialization than provided in the general preparation program.

In-Service Education

The continuing education of teachers including the process of recertification has also been caught up in the performance-based movement. The State of Arizona is attempting to develop a model for the renewal of all certificates based on performance criteria. Major emphasis in this effort is placed on an attempt to determine teacher effectiveness on the basis of student behavior and growth. Responsibility for establishing goals for performance and growth has been delegated to the local level and includes representation from the total community--parents and other patrons, teachers, school board, students, and administration. Performance objectives will take into consideration the affective and psychomotor as well as the cognitive domain, and a range of objectives will be used in the diagnostic procedure. Primary responsibility for developing approved assessment procedures and evaluating the results of instruction rests with the individual classroom teacher who must diagnose where the student is at the beginning of the school year and establish expectancy level

objectives. Objectives are flexible and may be modified during the year. Full implementation of the new recertification system is not expected before July 1, 1974.

Concurrently, this project will also seek to identify other criteria for determining teacher effectiveness for recertification, including self-evaluation as well as peer, student, lay, supervisory, employee, and external evaluation. It is anticipated that feedback will be provided to teacher training programs and to individual teachers to improve their effectiveness.

Depending on the degree of success achieved, the Arizona recertification model may provide an example to other states which are seeking to make their in-service programs more relevant, appropriate, and meaningful.

Certification Reciprocity

Several certification reciprocity schemes have emerged within recent years and there are indications that they may be moving toward consolidation into a single comprehensive system. A substantial number of states practice a form of institutional reciprocity based on accreditation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Under the terms of this agreement, candidates who have successfully completed an NCATE approved teacher education program are certificated without the necessity of a detailed transcript analysis and evaluation against specific state standards. Since NCATE evaluates special education as well as elementary and secondary programs, this form of reciprocity is available to special education teachers as well as to personnel in regular education.

Other major reciprocity programs currently in effect are (1) the compact which has been developed as a result of the Interstate Certification Project and (2) the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification Reciprocity System which is based on accceptance of state approval of teacher education programs under a set of common standards contained in Standards for State Approval of Teacher Education.[7] Each of these systems includes approximately thirty states. A substantial number of states reciprocate in certification under all three programs.

Reciprocity in special education is complicated by differences in categories of special education certificates offered by the various states. Teachers of the handicapped are often faced with the problem of having no directly equivalent credential available in another state to which they have relocated or are considering moving. Most situations can be resolved without great difficulty and serious problems of this nature are probably minimal, but every effort should be made to reconcile wide differences in certification practices among the states.

Summary

The competency-based movement is bringing about significant changes in state management procedures in teacher education and certification. The basic task in developing and implementing a workable system is the identification of the requisite competencies and determining how these competencies are to be measured.

Special education presents certain problems in certification some of which are common with general education and some of which are unique. Trends are evident in the mainstreaming of the education of the handicapped and in reducing the number of categories in special education certification.

The performance-based concept has also permeated in-service teacher education and recertification procedures. Interstate reciprocity in certification is increasing and a consolidated broad-based system appears to be on the way.

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